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Steven, Robert

FILE COPY

From: Fitzgerald, Tim(OIG)  
Sent: Friday, May 24, 2002 10:51 AM  
To: OIG-Venezuela  
Subject: WHAT IS BANDERA ROJA?

RELEASED IN PART  
B1, 1.4(D), B6

Tim Fitzgerald 05/24/2002 10:54:56 AM From DB/Inbox: Tim Fitzgerald

Cable Text:

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TELEGRAM

April 29, 2002

To: SECSTATE WASHDC - ROUTINE  
Action: INR  
From: AMEMBASSY CARACAS (CARACAS-1148-- ROUTINE)

TAGS: PREL, PGOV, ASEC, VE

Captions: SENSITIVE

Subject: WHAT IS BANDERA ROJA?

Ref: None

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SUMMARY  
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1. (U) The guerrilla group Bandera Roja has played a small, but conspicuous, role in the anti-Chavez opposition movement. Because of its violent reputation, Bandera Roja is most often accused by Chavistas of inciting violence in demonstrations, including the shootings on April 11. The group, which has never officially abandoned its "prolonged war" to revolutionize Venezuela, now looks like it might be evolving into yet another middle-of-the-road political party. End Summary.

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THE PROLONGED STRUGGLE  
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2. (U) The guerrilla group Bandera Roja (Red Flag) has played a small, but conspicuous, role in the anti-Chavez opposition movement. This ultra-left outfit has participated in all the major opposition marches and has faced off with the pro-Chavez students on several occasions at the Central University. Chavistas constantly accuse Bandera Roja of fomenting violence, and have even claimed that the group

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staged an attack on Miraflores during the April 11 insurrection. (We have found nothing to confirm this yet.) Its presence in the opposition alongside swag-bellied labor leaders and pot-banging housewives is a tribute to the strange diversity of the anti-Chavez forces.

3. (U) Bandera Roja was founded in 1970 after many members of the Communist left decided to abandon the armed movement and join political parties. The Marxist-Leninist Bandera--Stalin is on its logo and it used to receive training in Enver Hoxha's Albania--opted to continue the armed struggle and has never officially abandoned its commitment to overthrowing the Venezuelan state.

4. (SBU) Under its leader Gabriel Puerta, the group participated in Chavez's failed coup of February 1992. Bandera broke from Chavez in 1998

B1

according to one expert, it considers Fidel Castro a "bourgeois."

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STRANGE BEDFELLOWS  
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B1, B6

6. (U) As proof of Bandera's gradual assimilation into the political mainstream, it joined Carlos Ortega and Accion Democratica's ticket for the CTV elections. As a reward, one of its members, Pedro Moreno, now sits on the confederation's 17-member executive board. Last week Bandera published a manifesto in a Caracas daily describing its platform, which was surprisingly pro-democratic and

middle of the road--but anti-neoliberal, to be sure.

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COMMENT: COMING IN FROM THE COLD?  
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7. (SBU) Bandera Roja and its elusive leader Gabriel Puerta

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may be taking the first steps in a transformation from guerrilla group to political party.

End Summary.

Shapiro.

Additional Addressees:

None

cc:

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
AMEMBASSY-GEORGETOWN  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY MADRID  
AMEMBASSY QUITO  
USINT HAVANA

Distribution:

TED9864

ACTION INR-00

INFO	LOG-00	MFA-00	NP-00	ACQ-00	WHA-00	DS-00	EUR-00
	OIGO-00	UTED-00	VC-00	TEDE-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00
	ACE-00	IRM-00	TEST-00	ASDS-01	DSCC-00	DRL-02	NFAT-00
	SAS-00	/004W					

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R 291418Z APR 02  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5637  
INFO CIA WASHDC  
DIA WASHDC  
NSC WASHDC  
SECDEF WASHDC  
USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
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INR FOR SALCEDO  
NSC FOR MAISTO  
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A  
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End Cable Text

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